

# Ag Champions Program

While the average person is three generations removed from the farm, more and more people have questions about farming practices, where their food comes from and issues affecting agriculture. The constant access to news and information with media and the Internet allows consumers to read about issues affecting farmers – many of them being myths. FFA students are educated on these issues but many don't have the avenue to share with consumers why farmers and ranchers do what they do and how it affects their local communities.

The **Nebraska Corn Board** and **Nebraska FFA** are partnering on a new program and contest for these FFA students called “**Ag Champions**”. The purpose of the Ag Champions program is to build up FFA students to become “advocates” (agricultural advocates) in their communities and amongst their peers. Through this project, we want to engage FFA members by developing a lasting impact through direct community involvement, as well as encouraging grassroots advocacy. Through this plan, FFA chapters will determine an issue in their community, the audience they want to reach and expand on two parts to an advocacy plan: 1) defense, and 2) offense.

As issues affecting agriculture appear too often, we are encouraging local FFA chapters to have a plan in place to defend agriculture, while also putting agriculture on the offense. Education is key to important issues and could dispel many issues that arise when the foundation and basic understanding of an issue is in place.

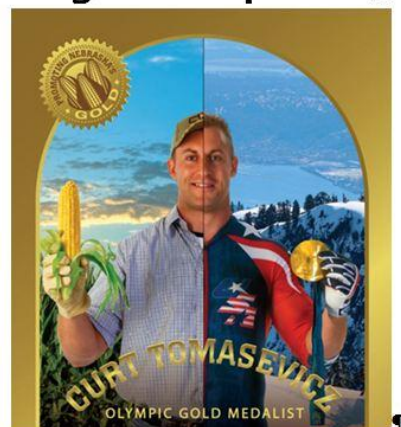
The Ag Champions program would provide a toolbox of resources and a contest which would earn the top three winning chapters grants, based off of the budget in their advocacy plan, to carry out their plan. The Grand Champion winning chapter will earn the opportunity to have Nebraska Corn Board spokesman and Olympic Gold medalist in the bobsled from Nebraska, Curt Tomasevicz to be involved with their program. [Click here](#) to view a video of Curt explaining the contest. While this contest only provides three winning grants, the goal of the Ag Champions program is to create advocates in our communities and help put a realistic plan in place that can be used by the FFA chapters and students in any situation.

The following guidelines will provide each Nebraska FFA Chapter an opportunity to apply for the Ag Champions contest.

## Contest Rules:

1. Each chapter can submit **one** plan. The plan may be put together by one class on behalf of the chapter, or from the full chapter.

## Ag-Champions



- a. *The goal of the contest is for your FFA chapter to put together a plan that addresses an issue in your community and reach out to a specific audience in your community, through communication and education, while also having a strategy in place to defend agriculture if/when the need arises.*
2. Chapters can **use the worksheet enclosed to prepare their plan**. There is a sample worksheet included for your reference. Please expand and thoroughly explain each question.
3. Each plan has three parts: Defense, Offense and Overall Plan. Below are details, but refer to sample worksheet for more specifics:

#### **Part 1: Defend**

- a. Determine an issue that is present in your community that is negative towards any facet of agriculture.
  - i. *Examples could be that a business is going “Meatless Monday” or the local zoning board is discouraging new livestock production in the county. If you cannot easily determine an issue, point out where there is not enough information about agriculture.*
- b. Determine the audience you want to reach pertaining to your issue you’ve identified.
  - i. *Examples of audiences could include: businesses, local zoning board/county commissioners, local parent organizations, civic groups like Lions Club or Kiwanis, children organizations, or just consumers in general.*
- c. Develop goals to defend agriculture to your selected audience. Include your objectives, materials needed, a public relations plan and follow-up.

#### **Part 2: Educate/Communicate**

- d. For your offense plan, set goals for communicating to and educating your audience determined in Part 1 about an agricultural issue(s).
- e. Write out your plan to show how you can reach your goals. Include details on the scope of impact, outcomes, and how you would utilize Olympian Curt Tomasevicz to help carry out your advocacy plan.

#### **Part 3: Overall Plan**

- f. Budget. *What dollar amount and types of resources will you need to put your advocacy plan into place?*
  - g. Don’t let the idea of a budget scare or deter you. Be realistic, yet think broadly when coming up with your plan and the dollar resources needed to make it successful. List long-term outcomes you would like to achieve through this advocacy plan.
  - h. Include a cover letter with your plan to the Nebraska Corn Board sharing the scope of impact and objectives with your plan, as well as why it is an effective plan that should be chosen as the winning Ag Champion plan. *(sample cover letter in the teacher’s classroom lesson plan)*
4. Most important: **BE CREATIVE!** Think outside of the box for this plan. Use ideas such as videos, photos, prezi presentations, social media, mock-town hall meetings, school assemblies, town festivals, etc. No idea is wrong or too small.

## Judging & Contest Prizes:

1. The Nebraska Corn Board will judge the plans and the winners will be announced by June 12, 2015.
2. The top three winning plans will be awarded the grant specified in their plan budget up to \$1,000. The winning "Grand Champion" chapter will be also be awarded the opportunity to work with Curt Tomasevicz to carry out their plan.

## Timeframe:

- **January 25 –March 15**

The Nebraska State Officers will be presenting information about the Ag Champions program to the chapters during their chapter visits from January to March.

- **March**

Professional Development Wednesday Webinar hosted by Nebraska FFA will include details on the Ag Champions program.

- **May 15**

Plans due to the Nebraska Corn Board office or emailed to [kelseyjpope@gmail.com](mailto:kelseyjpope@gmail.com) by 5:00 pm CST. If mailed, please send to:

*Nebraska Corn Board  
Ag Champions Program  
301 Centennial Mall South, 4th Floor  
PO Box 95107  
Lincoln, NE 68509*

- **June 12**

Winners will be announced.

## Supplemental materials for teachers/advisors:

1. Promotional video from Curt Tomasevicz to show to classes which explains the program.
2. The Professional Development Wednesday Webinar from Nebraska FFA will be held in early-mid March and will feature the program details and answer questions.
3. A lesson plan will be available that will fit into Career Readiness Practice Standards for use with current curriculum.

## Ag Champions Plan - **SAMPLE**

As this is just a sample of the Ag Champions advocacy plan. We expect your plan to expand more on each question.

**Chapter Name:** Local FFA

**Advisor:** Mr. Johnny Tractor

### Part 1: Defend

1. What ag issue is prevalent in your community that your chapter wants to focus on and why?

*Food safety because...{expand}*

2. What audience you will reach with your Ag Champions advocacy plan and why?

*We want to reach the Local PTA organization. The Local PTA organization is a group of parents who are concerned about issues affecting their children. Recently, they encouraged their children to eat only hormone-free meat because of concerns of food safety. We would like to reach them because many issues in agriculture are about food, which is one of the concerns of the PTA and by doing so, we can educate them on animal welfare and food safety practices. {expand}*

3. What are your objectives in reaching out to your audience about this issue?

*We want the PTA to understand the issues affecting agriculture and make informed choices for their families. {expand}*

4. How will you defend your issue and how will you inform your audience?

*Since our goal is to establish a relationship with the Local PTA organization, we hope to be a sounding board on issues that arise. If an issue affecting agriculture arises, we plan to create a short, informative video that the PTA could show at their meetings and share with their members. {expand}*

5. What materials would you provide to your audience and how would you get these materials to them?

*We plan to create short, informative videos, as well as a one-pager info sheet on that issue to distribute to the PTA and any other groups in our community who might be concerned about the issue. {expand}*

6. What public relations plans would you put into place?

*Along with our videos, we plan to write a letter to the editor, call in to our local radio station for an on-air interview and....{expand}.*

7. How would you follow-up with your audience after the issue has been brought to their attention and in the media for over one week?

*We plan to follow-up with the PTA group by reaching out to their president after one week to answer questions or to provide them with resources on the issue. {expand}*

## Part 2: Educate/Communicate

1. To help educate to your audience identified in Part 1, set at least three (3) goals/objectives for communicating to and educating your audience about an agricultural issue(s).

- a. *Food safety is a concern among many parents. Our first goal is develop a relationship with the PTA to dispel any myths about food production, especially farming practices in Nebraska. We could be a positive resource for any questions they have in the future, as well.*

- b.

- c.

2. What is your scope of impact? (where and how will you reach your audience to inform them about your issue)

*Our scope of impact is to positively influence the PTA parents about farming practices and help them feel comfortable with food production. As the parents meet once a month in the school cafeteria, we plan to attend as a guest speaker with a prepared presentation specific about food safety. {expand}*

3. What materials would you create for your audience?

*We plan to create a YouTube video for the PTA, as well as sharing it on our Facebook page. We would also create talking points on food safety because...{expand}*

4. How would you utilize Olympian Curt Tomasevicz to help carry out your agvocacy plan?

*We would invite Curt to speak at a school assembly where we invite the whole school and the PTA organization. Our chapter would introduce the food safety topic at the assembly and provide a short presentation before Curt spoke. We would also encourage Curt to include talking points about food safety that we have prepared for him. We also will host a lunch for the PTA and Curt after the assembly. {expand}*

5. How could you use social media to educate and communicate the information you gathered for your audience?

*As we are creating a video and plan to post it on our chapter Facebook page, we plan to also schedule out ag facts for once a week following posting our video and encouraging our followers to watch the video, then will hold a Facebook contest with*

*questions from the video. We will use the grant money to purchase (small prize) to give to the winners.*

### **Part 3: Overall Plan**

1. Budget. *What dollar amount and types of resources will you need to put your advocacy plan into place?*

*\$1,000 total*

*As we plan to create videos for our advocacy plan, we will need a video camera and wireless microphone. We can use our current computer and video editing software. (\$500)  
The remaining amount will pay for the luncheon for our PTA group with Curt Tomasevich. (\$500)*

2. List at least three (3) long-term outcomes you would like to achieve through this advocacy plan:
  - a. *The first outcome would be to provide informative, educational videos that help the PTA group form educated choices about issues affecting agriculture. {expand}*
  - b.
  - c.

3. Include a cover letter with your plan to the Nebraska Corn Board sharing the scope of impact and objectives with your plan, as well as why it is an effective plan that should be chosen as the winning Ag Champion plan.

*See sample in lesson plan.*

**\*\*\*A Word document of the Ag Champions Plan is available separately for the chapter to type their plan. \*\*\*[Click here](#) to download the word document.**